

Secure Ballot Management

For each Standard you are seeking certification in, you'll be given a questionnaire specific to that Standard to fill out. Most questionnaires will also request that you upload nonconfidential materials, such as examples of reports you have published or your standard operating procedures documents. This guide has tips to keep in mind when preparing for and filling out the Secure Ballot Management questionnaire so that your office has a more seamless experience.

The Standard

Your office protects ballot security from printing to storage using comprehensive ballot management processes. To achieve this standard:

- You have documented ballot management procedures for ballot organization, ballot accounting, ballot reconciliation, and chain of custody.
- You routinely train election staff on ballot management procedures.
- You organize your ballots in an orderly manner that promotes accuracy.
- You consistently account for ballots during each stage of the ballot lifecycle, documenting ballot totals and reviewing for accuracy.
- You reconcile the number of ballots with the number of voters and provide an explanation if numbers do not match.
- You store ballots in a secure space that only authorized personnel can access.
- You implement security strategies during ballot management processes to protect ballots from tampering.
- You have a process for reviewing completed ballot management forms for full completion and accuracy; your process requires different individuals to review than those who initially completed the forms.
- You build public understanding of ballot management processes.

Glossary

We've tried to keep jargon to a minimum, but some is unavoidable. Since many offices use different terminology, here are some terms used in the standard or questionnaire that may be unfamiliar or you may use in a different way:

- **Ballot organization:** how ballots are grouped into batches, boxes, bins, or other sets during the various stages of their lifecycle from your office's receipt of the ballot from the voter on until they are put into storage after the election has been certified.
- **Ballot accounting:** keeping track of the number of ballots at each stage and ensuring consistency during each transfer from one stage to the next.
- **Ballot reconciliation:** ensuring that the number of ballots, votes, and voters match, and providing an explanation for any discrepancies.

- **Chain of custody:** a process that tracks the movement and control of ballots in a documented way, noting who is in contact with them at different times and stages.

Who to include

You will get more out of the certification process and be able to complete the questionnaire more quickly if you involve the right staff in the process. Here are some suggestions for who to include for this standard:

- Staff who oversee the ballot organization, accounting, reconciliation, and chain of custody processes or locations where these processes take place
- Staff who communicate with the public

Materials requested

The questionnaire will request the following materials:

- Ballot management procedure documents
- Public-facing informational materials explaining your ballot management processes

You may not have documents with these titles or you may have reasons that you don't use some of these types of materials. In those cases, you can provide other documents that you use in these processes, or provide explanations for what you do instead.

Please provide only the versions or portions of these (or similar) documents that would be subject to public records requests in your jurisdiction. Do not provide any confidential documents or information. We encourage you to consult with your local counsel if you have questions about whether a document can be shared.

Example questions

Here are some examples of questions found in the certification questionnaire, to give you an idea of what you will be asked about:

Please further describe your office's ballot management procedures, including:

- Your ballot accounting process
- Your ballot reconciliation process
- How you have determined who is involved in each part of the process and why

Please describe your office's process for reviewing completed ballot management forms. How do you ensure accuracy throughout the ballot lifecycle?

- How often does your staff (including poll workers) receive training on ballot management procedures? What factors did you consider in determining how often to train your staff on ballot management?

Resources addressing this standard

If you are looking for ways to improve your processes in this area before applying for certification or to implement feedback you received about how to meet the standard, these publicly available, nonpartisan resources may help.

- [Drop box chain of custody tool](#): A digital chain of custody for ballot drop box retrieval teams to supplement or replace paper forms.
- ["Security Sandwich"](#): A set of nonpartisan templates to communicate about security practices and procedures throughout the election process, with spaces to highlight ballot management processes.

Using or reviewing these resources is not required for your office to be certified: certification is based on achieving the standard, not on using specific materials. These nonpartisan resources are provided for informational and educational purposes only.

Certification program information

For information on the certification program as a whole, as well as general advice on how to get the most out of the certification process, consult these resources:

- Our [guide](#) to the certification process
- [FAQs](#) about the Alliance certification program
- Go to [CertifyExcellence.org](https://www.electionexcellence.org) to apply